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THE MCA MONITOR

Volume I No. 1 November 1979

FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD

The First Annual General Meeting of the Montana Council on Alcoholism, held October 19, 1979, at the Billings Ramada Inn, was marked a great success by the MCA Board. At the morning session, Billings Mayor William Fox proclaimed 1979--80 as S.O.B.E.R. year and received an honorary membership from William D. Morrissey, President of the Midland Empire Council on Alcoholism.

MCA Interim Board of Trustees President Andrew J. Utick delivered a report on the legal history and present status of the Council. MCA Executive Director James A. Forsell reported on new directions for the Council and listed the goals and objectives he plans for the coming year.

Forsell discussed the Volunteer Resource Development Program (VRDP) grant from National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse (NIAAA), and the drinking-driver awareness campaign contract for services ("Slow On the Bottle, Enjoy the Road"--S.O.B.E.R.) with Highway Traffic Safety Division, Department of Community Affairs, which, along with dues and contributions, support all Council activities and programs. Interim Vice President Cliff Christian discussed the history and present financial condition of the Council. Presentations were well received by the Council membership.

The film "Soft is the Heart of a Child" was previewed and was enthusiasticly recommended for purchase by those in attendance. Contact MCA for information on the film and a schedule of dates it is available on loan.

Emmett "Curly" Thornton, Jr., statewide S.O.B.E.R. Campaign coordinator, reported on past activities and future campaign plans. Thornton praised the campaign accomplishments of the Lincoln Council on Alcoholism and of the newly organized Midland Empire Council on Alcoholism, as well as the excellent work of volunteer S.O.B.E.R. sponsors statewide.

National Council on Alcoholism Field Service Specialist Neil Scott, featured guest speaker for the meeting, led off the afternoon session with a description of the history and purposes of NCA. Along with previous speakers, Scott urged recruitment of new volunteer members and discussed his past association with the concerned Montana citizens who initiated efforts to establish MCA in 1976. He emphasized the great level of accomplishment which can be achieved in a short time by the efforts of only a small number of dedicated volunteer workers.

Interim President Andy Utick convened the afternoon business session with election of Board members, officers and establishment of committees as the main items of business. Newly elected Board members convened a Board meeting to elect officers, elect the executive committee and determine committee interests following the close of the General Meeting.

We're happy to report that, as a result of the meeting, the Council was able to enlist a great many new members and distribute membership literature to numerous persons attending other weekend events in Billings.

MCA Board of Trustees Officers are: Andrew J. Utick, Helena--President; Clifford J. Christian, Helena--Vice President; Helen H. Bristow, Helena--Secretary; and Robert W. Oaks, Glasgow--Treasurer. Other members of the Executive Committee are: Louis Forsell, Clancy; William D. Morrissey, Billings; and Ray M. Hjelseth, Polson.

Other elected Board members are: Clyde I. Dowell, Eureka; Michael J. Switzer, Libby; John Wallace, Libby; Percy DeWolfe, Browning; Virginia S. Pasma, Havre; Joseph B. Marmion, Geyser; Mary Ellen Robinson, Highwood; Walter K. Foster, Great Falls; John D. Weidenfeller, Missoula; Albert L. Guay, Butte; George W. Nelson, Galen; Paul J. Everett, Jr., Anaconda; Joy I. Nash, Bozeman; Patrica L. Palm, Hardin; Howard W. Mars, Billings; and Martha S. Herlevi, Red Lodge. Lewis L. Cleland of Ronan was named an at-large member of the Board at a later meeting of the Executive Committee.

The date of the next Board meeting was set for January 25, 1980, with a location in the Butte-Helena area to be set at an upcoming Executive Committtee meeting.

MCA GRANT APPROVED

Andrew J. Utick, President of the MCA Board of Trustees, announced that the Council has received notification of the approval of the $50,000 second-year Volunteer Resources Development Program (VRDP) Grant from National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse.

All VRDP programs deal with increasing the voluntary resources available to the alcoholism field, but there are great differences among states as to how his is accomplished.

In Montana the emphasis is presently on recruiting and training local volunteers in conjunction with the S.O.B.E.R. driver awareness campaign. Volunteer steering committees are organized in Montana communties to conduct S.O.B.E.R. and, as interest and commitment is mobilized, to form local councils on alcoholism which are affiliated through MCA with the National Council on Alcoholism.

Local volunteer councils can identify and assess community problems related to alcohol abuse and alcoholism. With training and technical assistance from MCA, NCA, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division, local alcoholism service providers and NIAAA, local volunteers can devise solutions to those problems by utilizing volunteer resources.

A key feature of the MCA VRDP concept is improving the cost-benefit ratio for alcoholism services offered in Montana. MCA seeks to assure that the scarce dollars available for prevention and treatment of alcoholism and alcohol abuse in Montana provide economical services to as many persons as possible by augmenting paid services with volunteer resources.

MCA will develop and provide quality training for both volunteers and paid workers to complement the training opportunities presently available through state and federal sources. The Council is also committed to maintaining a strong public information and education program utilizing public media and volunteer-initiated and sponsored forums, displays and publicity events.

Coordination services are another key feature of VRDP activities. Coordination can involve referring calls to the MCA office for information, or can result when MCA or a local council secures cooperative support from different agencies or groups in sponsoring a community project.

As a network of local councils, steering committees and task forces is organized across Montana, VRDP functions such as volunteer needs assessment, volunteer placement, volunteer resource inventory development and planning assistance can be exercised.

Local volunteer groups are in a good position to identify and concentrate upon local needs through locating and organizing local voluntary resources already available in the community. As a statewide organization, MCA can collect input from local affiliates in many Montana communities and pool the information for the use of MCA membership and volunteer workers statewide.

Specific VRDP goals and objectives for the future are discussed elsewhere in this issue.

NEW EXEC NAMED

In late August, the Interim Board of Trustees of the Montana Council on Alcoholism selected James A. Forsell as Executive Director of the Council from among more than 25 applicants.

A native of Butte, Jim Forsell earned his B.A. in Community Services from Seattle University in 1971, and his M.S. in Alcohol Studies from University of Arizona in 1975. He is a recovering alcoholic with twelve years of continuous sobriety.

Mr. Forsell has served as Program Coordinator for the Western Area Alcohol Education and Training Program in Reno, Nevada; as Executive Director of Community Health Services for Alcoholism in Butte; as Director of Planning for Alcoholism Programs for the Community Action Council of Snohomish County in Everett, Washington; and as counselor and office manager of Alcenas, a residental treatment facility in Seattle, Washington.

Mr. Forsell has very specific experience in reviewing and writing grants for alcoholism programs and projects, and in developing alcoholism education and training systems, treatment programs and modalities.

A prime consideration in the Board's selection of Mr. Forsell is that his education and experience will bolster MCA efforts at commnity development and organization, recruiting and working with volunteers and at development of a variety of training programs.

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MCA ON THE MOVE .....

The Montana Council on Alcoholism is refining a work plan containing goals and objectives for the second and following years of Council activity. The plan places major emphasis upon organizing 10 to 20 local alcoholism councils in Montana by the end of the second year of MCA operation.

As part of this organizational work, staff is designing a workshop format which will provide local volunteers with all basic information and materials needed to set up and operate a local alcoholism council. The workshops will be conducted by a staff trainer over a one-day period in selected target communities.

In addition to local council development, the MCA training program schedule will include a media utilization workshop conducted by NCA Field Services Specialist Neil Scott, of Bellevue, Washington, for those involved in alcoholism services. Workshops held throughout the state on conduct of the S.O.B.E.R. drinking-driving awareness campaign will continue to be a regular Council training activity.

To improve the level of service MCA can offer to members and community organizations, an Information Clearinghouse function will be established at the MCA office in Helena. The Clearinghouse will produce the MCA newsletter, News Alert clipping service summary, Legislative Alert mailings, a catalog of free and at-cost pamphlets and brochures, a list of books and publications, a growing film library (and information on other film libraries) and a "job bank" of paid and volunteer openings in the alcoholism field. In addition, MCA staff will continue to respond to all inquires about alcoholism. If the required information is not available at our office, we will locate the appropriate source and obtain the information or direct the inquiry to the proper source.

A variety of other education and prevention activities will fill out the work plan. The Council will sponsor an annual statewide Alcohol Awareness Week and a Cottage Program, both of which are well adapted to implementation by volunteer workers. The Cottage Program is an informal door-to-door approach. It involves training volunteers in conducting informal meetings in individual homes among a small circle of relatives and friends who are interested in learning about alcoholism.

In order to better organize and schedule staff time for speeches and presentations to local audiences, MCA is developing a Speaker's Bureau. This service will list available speakers and schedule speaking appearances by staff, Board, general members, local council members, alcoholism professionals and prominient recovering alcoholics from Montana and other states. Local organizations requiring an informed speaker, or speakers who wish to be listed may contact the Helena MCA office or a local council for further information.

Following initial contacts made in development of the S.O.B.E.R. Campaign, staff will increase work with colleges, universities and individual school districts to augment available curricula materials on alcoholism and to recruit Montana's educators as volunteers for alcoholism. Because of their frequent contact with youth and the ability to spot alcohol problems early through declining grades, performance or attendance problems, educators are particularly valuable volunteer resources.

To make better use of public media of all kinds, MCA is planning to organize a media committee to provide professional input and guidance in future media work, and to enable the Council to better assess the coverage and impact of media activities.

VOLUNTEERISM

"Voluntary effort is . . . part of our heritage as a free society. Throughout our history, people have come together voluntarily, whether it was to raise a cabin, care for the needy, or share what little they had. Our people have always helped each other . . . . Volunteerism is important for another reason. It provides balance between the government and our private citizens. It gives people the opportunity to act because they feel a cause is important, not because the law requires them to, or because it's profitable. In America, through the voluntary sector, the individual can decide on his or her personal level of involvement and commitment. This freely-chosen diverse effort makes for better government and a better society." --President Jimmy Carter in a September 25, 1977, speech to the United Way of America.

(Continued on page 4)

MCA has a new mailing address:
Montana Council on Alcoholism
616 HELENA AVENUE SUITE 104
Helena, Montana 59601

Much volunteer potential in Montana is underutilized because alcoholism service providers, organizations and potential volunteers themselves do not understand how productive volunteer work can be to an organization. If an alcoholism service organization can provide meaningful tasks and the opportunity to become involved in all levels of activity, people who believe in the purposes of the group will volunteer their time, talents and resources.

Just as volunteers must work to further MCA, a local alcoholism council, a community alcoholism program or a S.O.B.E.R. driver awareness campaign steering committee, the organization must further the purposes and meet the needs of the individual volunteers.

People work for ends which bring them personal satisfaction: a need to help others, civic duty, resolution of local needs or problems, development of new personal skills and understanding, public visibility, new learning experiences, the opportunity to meet new people, the need to utilize spare time or to assume new responsibilities -- all can motivate persons to volunteer for service in the alcoholism field.

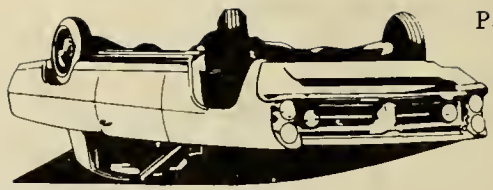
Volunteers are desperately needed in the alcoholism field. If you wish to volunteer or want additional information on the Council, volunteers or alcoholism, contact MCA, your local council or community alcoholism program.

S. O. B. E. R.

Slow On the Bottle, Enjoy the Road

Montana Council on Alcoholism has entered into a new contract for services with Highway Traffic Safety Division, Department of Community Affairs, to conduct a drinking-driving awareness campaign for FY 1980, beginning October 1, 1979.

More than half of all automobile deaths in Montana involve a drinking driver. Sixty percent of all automobile accidents are related to alcohol. MCA, a state affiliate of National Council on Alcoholism, initiated the NCA "Slow On the Bottle, Enjoy the Road" -- S.O.B.E.R. Campaign in February of 1979, with the goal of reducing the incidence of alcohol-related accidents on Montana Highways.



Bottoms Up.

The campaign serves notice that it is OK to refuse a drink if you are planning to drive . . . or to refuse a ride from someone who is intoxicated. The S.O.B.E.R. Campaign seeks to identify alcoholics, to separate them from "irresponsible" drinkers, and to refer them to treatment.

MCA is developing S.O.B.E.R. as an ongoing project with emphasis on holidays. The Council is working to build public recognition of the campaign and committment to S.O.B.E.R., not only during the intensified holiday campaigns, but throughout the year as well.

An effective way to make people aware of the drinking-driving problem is to get them involved in practical solutions. MCA organizers recruit campaign supporters from among concerned citizens, government, service clubs, schools, business and professional groups to initiate S.O.B.E.R. in their community.

S.O.B.E.R. can also solidify community decision-makers into a local alcoholism council with alcoholism service enrichment as a common goal. Local councils will receive training and technical assistance with other projects in addition to S.O.B.E.R.

S.O.B.E.R. provides school districts with a ready-made program, "Alternative Action," designed to be flexible and easy to integrate into class courses or projects. In schools, Alternative Action can provide technical assistance and training to key faculty members and can utilize student activity groups to initiate projects related to drinking and driving, alcoholism and alcohol abuse. The campaign can mobilize peer pressure to impact the 11 to 19-year age bracket, which is involved in a disproportionate number of highway accidents.

THE MCA BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND STATE OFFICE STAFF WISH ALL OUR READERS A SAFE AND HAPPY THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY